

'32 Gold Rush Miners Passed Up No Chances

By WENDEL BURCH (United Press Staff Correspondent)

BUTTE, Mont.—Gold, shining dully through black sands and studied in brassy flakes over quartz veins, has refracted as brilliant a prism of colorful events during the past year as ever it did in the roaring camps of early California, Nevada or Montana.

Six-shooters and stage coaches, dance halls and faro tables with their fantastic life in the old West, may have represented a more concentrated reflection of gold's power, but the current procession of ancient automobiles, skinned clerks, determined laborers, newly grub-staked veterans and excited amateurs has a steady glow that will make it a romantic episode in depression history.

"Old-timers" of the 1932 rush, when they gather round to tell of their experiences, may recall how they found gold in their overalls, for instance.

Pan Their Pants

The modern prospector has learned to be exceedingly thorough. If he has dabbled in sluice boxes, or has sloshed through gold-bearing sands during the day, he usually makes a point of washing his clothing, then pans the sand and gravel coming from the folds and lining of his work suit. Sometimes he gets nothing from the operation, but there might be a worth-while amount tucked away.

When the Mark Twain or the Bret Harte of the 1932 Argonauts writes of the gold hunt, he may tell the story of the goldbrick that wasn't a goldbrick.

Near Lewiston, Mont., a man found a bar of solid gold, stamped with the name of an old mining company, now defunct. Overjoyed, he rushed his find to the Denver mint.

That office promptly informed him that it would retain the gold, that he would get nothing for it, and that the government would claim it on the ground it had been stolen from or lost by the mining company.

Overlook No Chances

A startling point for reflection in the 1932 gold rush is the incredible fact that white men are "cleaning up" placer dumps and old workings left by Chinese. The Chinese coolie was not highly regarded in his day. With amazing patience he would work for years, a bit at a time, he would work for hundreds of dollars in gold from abandoned white men's workings. He ate little, he spent nothing, he had nothing—but he usually got enough to return to China and become a man of property. Now the white man is cleaning up after the despised coolie.

Someone may preserve the story of the man in Diamond City, Montana, who was reported to have swept the streets, panning in the dust and gravel he thus obtained. In it he reportedly found gold dust and flakes stamped from the boots and trousers of the more prodigal early-day miners.

Tales of the discovery of old, forgotten and lost mines are legion. In Idaho a neglected hydraulic stream, almost disregarded by its operators, was said to have uncovered the Crawford vein, a rich ore body long sought.

In Montana, near Confederate Gulch, a small operator was reported to have stumbled onto a \$100,000 fortune when he uncovered an old slide, it was used for years under a rock slide, it was boxed.

Not all old mines are productive. An energetic group of newcomers began work in an old shaft south of Butte, much to the surprise of old residents of the district. Investigation showed they hoped to uncover \$200,000 miners were said to have stolen from the company operating the mine, and thrown to the bottom of the shaft.

"You won't find anything there," chuckled a gray-haired miner. "I was foreman of that mine—and we took out the few dollars in ore the men had chucked down there before we closed her up."

Back of all this activity lies a bizarre circumstance—the "golden paradox" of the 1932 rush, while the United States treasury had \$1,000,000,000 in gold stocks in its vaults—a record amount and more than any other nation in the world—its western citizens were engaged in the most determined gold hunt in 25 years.

Bootlegging Was Concerning U. S. In the Year 1833

FORT UNION, Mont.—(U.P.)—One hundred years ago the federal government was concerned with bootlegging, rum running, and illegal sale of intoxicating liquor.

The bootlegger of 1833 dealt with Indians. Generally he was a fur trader, for that century held that no deal with an Indian could be concluded without the assistance of potent whisky or some alcoholic drink.

The admitted purpose of the liquor was to befuddle the Indian so completely that he would trade perhaps an entire season's catch of valuable pelts. The traders favored pure alcohol for this purpose, since smaller and less easily discovered shipments of the liquor could be brought in, yet the Indians made more irresponsible with a few drinks.

False bottom cups, filled with an inch or so of tallow, were commonly used to serve up the alcohol and water. A large thumb thrust into the cup aided in cutting down the tallow. The common practice was to pour the Indian a "stiff one," then cut down the alcohol as he grew intoxicated, until soon he would barter furs for nothing but water.

The government made strenuous efforts to halt such practices, and forbid importation of all intoxicating liquors.

Boatmen along the Missouri river succeeded, however, in smuggling in large quantities by concealing casks in flour barrels, molasses barrels and beneath cordage or lumber.

Kenneth McKenzie, representative of the American Fur Company, conceived the brilliant plan of installing and operating a corn whisky still at Fort Union in 1833.

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